



**Secretary's Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council
Agency of Education – The Cavern Conference Room
South Burlington High School – Library Conference Room
January 7, 2013**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Council Members: Tracey Tsugawa, Jeff Fannon, Saben Littlefield, Justin Lambert, Barbara Crippen, Charles Johnson, Lucie Garand, Mill Moore, Curtiss Reed, Ken Page, Armando Vilaseca, Jeff Francis, Kim Brittenham, Leah Soule, Henri Sparks, Kathy Johnson

AGENDA:

Item 1:

Updates from Work Groups

Chair Tsugawa suggested starting off with updates from the Working Groups.

WORK GROUPS:

Data Work Group:

Moore distributed a report from the Data Workgroup. The overall finding is that about 17% of all high school students have reported experiencing bullying. They discussed two principal sources of data: the CDC's YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) and the Agency of Education's data collection system. Two significant gaps in data were observed. There is no information on bullying and harassment of or by adults in the schools and no data available on the resolution of bullying and harassment incidents; there is also no information on whether people are satisfied with the outcomes.

Crippen questioned if there was a preference for the two different surveys. Moore replied that he did not have a preference, but would welcome feedback on this.

C. Johnson shared that Vergennes High School has students active in collecting data on a daily basis. Francis mentioned that VT NEA is conducting a survey that could possibly be useful – and that we might want to look into participating in this. If we could address school climate via an instrument that is already in place, that would make a lot of sense. This should not hinge on who is funding the survey. Sparks added that when he travels around his school district, he has been told repeatedly, by teachers, that we are not addressing the real problem, which is adult bullying.

Fannon offered that there is another group identified by the Legislature that is addressing bullying in the workplace and that this specific issue was not part of the HHB advisory council's original mission. Francis stated that we need to consider the inter-play in the school-community environment; most workplaces do not involve service to a large population of students. If we look past the dynamic that we have students and adults in close proximity to each other, it could be argued that this very significant connection is being overlooked and it may be a challengeable point to pass this off to the study examining bullying in the workplace.

Crippen added that the role that adults play in modeling behavior in schools is really important to consider. If we had decent data we could do targeted training in the schools, but right now we do not have money for that. There was some hope that there would be grant money, but so far, that is not the case.

Training Work Group:

Fannon said his group also discussed adult bullying, but felt that student-to-student bullying was their focus. At its last meeting the group discussed five possible issues to focus on: developing and conducting a train-the-trainer program to build capacity within school districts/supervisory unions to provide basic training to school staff; work with the standards board on including bullying and harassment in the training for new teachers and as a requirement for initial licensure; working with schools and students on developing a statewide media anti-bullying anti-harassment campaign; addressing bullying and harassment on buses by working with administrators and bus personnel to develop skills and procedures to deal with bullying; setting up a pilot program at a small district where models and best practices could be developed and then shared with other districts. Often the front line people, such as paraprofessionals, have very little training time.

Sparks commented that all 300 paraprofessionals in his district were trained this year, for the first time. He stated that EVERYONE that deals with kids should be mandated to have training in the area of bullying and/or harassment. This needs to be a community effort that includes teachers, students, and parents – it does not stop when students leave schools.

Tsugawa stated that the council needs to look at what resources are already in existence and see how this can be adapted to fit Vermont's needs.

Reed reported that in Southeastern Vermont, coaches, cafeteria workers, and custodians are trained in dealing with harassment and bullying issues so that every adult buys into the idea that this is their responsibility. Part of the challenge is changing the culture in the school – for example, changing the lack of communication between teaching staff and custodial staff (who may be witnesses to bullying or harassment).

Vilaseca commented that any involvement is better than just ignoring the behavior. This group acknowledged that the low comfort level in dealing with such incidents can be an issue that can be addressed through training.

Sparks reiterated that a lot of students do not report bullying incidents for fear that nothing will happen. Students are not confident that there will be a response to their complaint because historically this had not been the case.

Student Leadership Work Group:

This group did not have an update for the council.

Tsugawa ended this discussion and redirected the group to agenda items.

Chair Tsugawa reminded the council that it needs to figure out ways to include other working groups in the individual work group discussions, so that participation and information sharing across work groups is enabled.

Agenda Item 2:

Review & Approval of Curtiss' Draft Vision Statement

Tsugawa stated that this was not intended to be an exercise in group editing, but instead asked that council members think about adopting one or both of these statements. Council members were asked to weigh in individually and briefly on the issue of adopting one, both, or neither of the statements.

Johnson's and Reed's statements were both read aloud to the group.

Council members weighed in and there was consensus that Reed's statement would be the best choice as it captured succinctly the group's concepts and was easy for the general public to understand. Some edits were suggested, specifically around the use of the word "school" and some elements from Johnson's statement were integrated.

Tsugawa suggested that in order to come up with something for the legislative report, that she and Vilaseca spend some time integrating key ideas from these two statements and then send a draft to the entire council before it goes to the legislature. She reminded the group that the mission/vision statement would continue to be a work in progress. The group agreed with this plan.

Agenda Item 3:

A Discussion About the Council's "End Product"

Chair Tsugawa asked the council, public included, to break into groups of 3-4 and take fifteen minutes to address the following questions: What should our end products/outcomes be? What do we need to produce/find to include in a statewide information and resource clearinghouse? The group was asked to come up with some specific ideas of end products such as: generating legislative recommendations for key issues, creating list serves for state educators, identifying electronic library of resources, etc. Groups were advised to have a note taker.

Newly arrived visitors/council members introduced themselves: Winton Goodrich, VSBA; Cheryl Gilbert, VT State Coordinator for the Healthy Workplace Bill; Irina Assur, a parent with a bullied child and a successful outcome; Robert Appel, Human Rights Commission. Each group shared one key idea from their respective group. Some of the ideas generated by the groups include:

- Schools need to adopt advisor/advisee programs where there is a significant adult available to advocate for students – and a nourishing culture is created.

- There needs to be connectedness of student to at least one adult person in the school – creating a safe school culture.
- Pick a school, set a level playing field of expectations for students and staff and do a survey at the ends of the year, YAATST would be a good group to work on this.
- Create a train-the-trainers program to create a cadre of trainers from supervisory unions to provide bullying and harassment 101 trainings for school staff in that supervisory union.
- Statewide resource center with consequences for repeat perpetrators.
- Pledge to create a respectful community environment; have this pledge signed and pasted on the walls so that you are reminded of your pledge and hold everyone accountable.

The group was asked to compile a complete list of their ideas and provide this list to Tsugawa by Friday morning.

Agenda Item 4:

Discussion about how to Collect Input from Around the State from Various Stakeholder Groups

In an effort to find ways to gather information on a statewide level – for parents, the public, other organizations, etc., Tsugawa asked the group to engage in a group brainstorm about how to get information out to the public and how to solicit information/feedback. How do we reach these groups? How do we share information once it is gathered? Who will review resources once they are gathered?

Suggestions from the council:

- Facebook
- School Websites
- APB (All Points Bulletin) soliciting ideas - more of the challenge is getting the message out
- Public Forum through the Website
- PSA

In an effort to give the group an idea of the dimensions of sharing resources on a statewide basis, Reed shared that at a recent gathering of 180 teachers, they came up with 120 different resources.

K. Johnson posed these questions: 1) What is working and what are the best practices? 2) What part of the system is broken? 3) What are the bright spots? She suggested dividing up the council and meeting with teachers/staff across the state and asking these questions.

Tsugawa solicited the guests for their input. Below is what was offered:

- Use Twitter, Facebook and email to direct people to a particular website.
- Use Survey Monkey, the South Burlington principal uses this very effectively.
- Use support from external organizations – How can we support you?
- There are a lot of other folks that want to be supportive and helpful and may not have 600 years of experience, but do have resources to share.
- Talk with people who are experiencing harassment, hazing and bullying and ask them to identify obstacles for resolution and effective resources for addressing these issues.
- More important than resources, what is needed is a go-to person in schools and confidence that the problem will be handled appropriately.
- There needs to be more publicity and in multiple places - within the school, the state, via websites; there should be a public update/press release so that people know the council exists.

- Need to share what the council has accomplished and clarify that the council is not here to fix a specific problem. Tsugawa and Vilaseca should think about reaching out to the media via “The 30.”

Tracey asked for 2-3 volunteers to work with her on identifying what information would be collected and from whom, and to assist her in developing a strategy for collecting and sharing this. Reed, Lambert and Brittenham volunteered.

Agenda Item 5:

Working group meeting/work time

The council broke into work groups.

Agenda Item 6:

Working group reports/wrap up

The working groups provided the following reports:

Student Leadership Working Group:

Assemblies are not terribly effective with students. Since there are a lot of different groups offering different statewide conferences, is a statewide student conference possible? This group also discussed developing resources for parents.

Data Collection Working Group:

There was further discussion on getting some questions on the NEA survey. Vilaseca offered to help with this. This will give us some information on adult bullying. This group also discussed designated employees, presumably those who have been trained. Who are they? What have they been trained on? And how is this working?

Training Working Group:

Looked at low-hanging fruit: training for bus drivers and initial licensure requirements related to bullying and harassment. Vilaseca will ask our ROPA coordinator to attend the next work group meeting. The group talked about training for bus drivers, what their contracts look like in terms of training requirements, and how to best gather input from administrators and successful bus drivers to identify best practices and future training needs.

NEXT STEPS:

Tsugawa is hoping that working groups will meet between now and the next full council meeting, which will be in March. If a working group is meeting, please get that information to the entire council so that other council members can participate.

The next meeting will be in Central Vermont, possible sites are AOE’s 302 location, U-32 High School, or Montpelier High School.

Soule suggested the meeting be scheduled for Monday, Wednesday or Friday since she and Lamberton have internships on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Vilaseca and Tsugawa will meet in the near future regarding a press release. A small group will meet with Tsugawa on input/feedback structure process.

Vilaseca and Tsugawa will discuss and refine the vision statement to be included in the report that is to be submitted to the legislature. Vilaseca advised that the legislature be notified that our report will be later than the January 15 due date. He suggested that we could have it ready by January 25.

Meeting adjourned.